

## 2021 LEGISLATIVE INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION – ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

### ***A foundational investment in environmental justice and equity***

*Oregon Health Authority goal: eliminate health  
inequities by 2030*

People in Oregon recognize that systemic racism and historical and contemporary injustices have led to health inequities in the state. Environmental threats like wildfire smoke, water insecurity and unhealthy homes disproportionately impact communities of color, tribal communities and communities that are low-income. Racist housing policies relegated these communities to areas with higher pollution, heat exposure and natural disaster risks. Systemic educational disinvestment and lack of oversight results in overrepresentation and lack of protections in jobs with greater exposure to environmental hazards.

**Complex environmental public health problems require a nimble, community-based and equity-centered public health system.** Without this system, Oregon risks its public health resilience, response and recovery, and ongoing and emerging environmental health threats will continue to exacerbate health inequities.

A 2016 assessment of Oregon's public health system documented low capacity to identify and address environmental health risks among state and local public health authorities. **A portion of a \$60.6 million Legislative investment in public health modernization supports local, regional and state efforts to begin working toward environmental justice and equity and climate resilience.**

### ***This investment in environmental public health modernization means:***

- Collecting **comprehensive environmental health data** to identify and mitigate risks to health and disproportionate impacts to communities experiencing racism, oppression and systemic under-investment.
- Identifying the **top environmental health risks and the people most exposed to those risks** at the state and community level with a focus on **risks intensified by rapidly accelerating climate change.**



- Developing **local and regional strategies** that support **equitable climate adaptation** to increased fire, smoke, heat, floods, drought, water-borne disease and vector-borne disease. For example, establishing community smoke alert systems and options for vulnerable people to avoid wildfire smoke exposure. More broadly, identifying opportunities to maximize health co-benefits in land use, transportation, housing, energy, food and other systems shaped by public policies and investments.
- Investing in communities to co-create **solutions** to climate and other environmental public health issues in **ways that are culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate** and **address the community's priorities**
- Increasing local and regional **environmental hazard preparedness planning, community engagement, and response capacity** including proactive and timely risk communications
- **Partnership across state agencies** to promote environmental health co-benefits of state natural resource, land use, built environment and other environmental policies and programs.

#### *Anticipated outcomes for environmental public health modernization:*

- Completed **climate and health assessments** to include environmental and climate data and indicators.
- Local climate resilience and environmental hazard preparedness **plans reflecting evidence-based environmental health risks and strategies.**
- **Demonstrated collaborations** among state, local and tribal health departments and community partners to co-create and prioritize strategies that affect priority populations.
- As resources allow, **identification and implementation of cross-sector strategies** that promote health-supportive natural resource, land use and built environment policies and programs.

#### *Without a sustained focus on environmental public health modernization, Oregon risks:*

- Continued inequities in exposure to environmental health risks, as Oregon's governmental public health system also struggles to address the ongoing health and social impacts of COVID-19;
- Fragmented and inadequate responses to multiple, simultaneous public health and environmentally related crises such as COVID-19, influenza, wildfires and excessive heat.

#### *Public health modernization is being implemented across the state:*

- *Local public health authorities*
  - **Acquire environmental epidemiology expertise** to identify and track risk and outcomes
  - **Engage community partners to build communities' capacity** to identify, prioritize and formulate strategies that address environmental hazards and build long term resilience

- Engage in local and regional strategies for **‘all hazards’ resiliency planning** and **maximize health co-benefits to priority populations of transportation, energy, housing and greenspace investments.**
- *Tribal public health authorities*
  - **Partner with communities and medical providers** on disease prevention
  - **Identify tribal best practices for modernizing** tribal public health
  - **Engage in ‘all hazards’ resiliency planning** and **advancing healthy waters and first foods**
- *Community-Based Organizations*
  - **Co-create community climate equity** and resilience plans and projects
  - Develop **culturally and linguistically responsive** community engagement and education strategies that reduce exposures to climate and other environmental hazards
  - Work with public health to **identify and connect with hard to reach populations**
- *Oregon Health Authority*
  - **Provide leadership and statewide infrastructure** that are community-based and equity-centered
  - With partners, **develop and implement a framework for using data** to identify leading environmental risks to human health and corresponding plans to mitigate risks
  - Provide **technical expertise** including toxicology and environmental health assessments
  - **Engage with state agency partners** to maximize health co-benefits of natural resource, built environment, land use and other policies, plans and programs to advance climate resilience and reduce environmental health risks.

Oregon’s pathbreaking investment in environmental public health will ensure our public health system can identify, plan for and prevent health impacts from climate and other environmental threats. This capacity is key to ensuring all our people and communities thrive with optimal physical, mental and social well-being.

| <b>Oregon’s Overall Public Health Modernization Investment 2021-2023</b> | <b>All Modernization</b> |
|--|--------------------------|
| Local Public Health Authorities  | \$33,484,623             |
| Tribal Public Health Authorities   | \$4,367,000              |
| Community-Based Organizations  | \$10,000,000             |
| Oregon Health Authority  | \$12,803,623             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$60,655,246</b>      |

*Note: Portions of funding for each category of recipient are supporting environmental public health actions.*